



SENATOR HELEN GARRETT has served in the General Assembly since 1980, and has been the Majority Whip since 1982. The Paducah Democrat has worked for her party in many capacities, including as president of the Democratic Women's Club of Kentucky and Secretary of the Democratic State Central Executive Committee.

Senator Garrett serves on the Committee on Banking and Insurance, the Committee on Energy and the Transportation Committee. She is chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Vehicle Regulation.

GENERAL SESSION

Friday, March 20, 1987

Remarks from Senator Helen Garrett

Chairman, Kentucky General Assembly Subcommittee on Highway Vehicle Regulation

It's easy to support transportation needs in Kentucky when you have men of the caliber of Calvin Grayson. He did a fantastic job in explaining to the legislature the needs of the Transportation Center. I think he has proven to all Kentuckians that there was a need, and he's filling that need. He not only has support of my committee, but he now has the support of all of the legislators of Kentucky. We see that he's doing a good job with the very meager amount of money that is being put into the Transportation Center. It provides a continuation of expertise and education in training.

Sometimes the Commonwealth suffers in transportation due to changes of administration. I'm very proud to support the Transportation Center in this program. My support and the support of industry, local governments, and the University of Kentucky stems from the work that Calvin Grayson has done.

In recent months, the subject of Kentucky's local bridge system has been a high priority topic of the Highways and Vehicles Regulation Subcommittee. Most of our concern stems from a major collapse of a bridge in Ohio, which prompted the federal government to pass legislation to inventory and inspect structural damages and post-load ratings on all bridges.

The Subcommittee on Vehicle and Regulations and Highways met in December of 1986 on this topic, due to the special problems in Kentucky. Mr. Richard Sutherland from the Department of Highways gave the members an overview of the situation, including some very interesting statistics. In Kentucky alone, there are 12,624 bridges inventoried on the state and local system. The local road system includes 4400 of these bridges. From this total, 3,967 bridges are rated substandard. According to Calvin Grayson here at the University, this figure represents the largest percentage in the fifty states.

The number 1,520 is the most important figure. This represents the number of local bridges rated less than ten tons. This means that they cannot, or should not, accommodate a school bus loaded with children. In many cases, the problem has been temporarily put aside by the rerouting of the buses. However, with other more pressing circumstances, children are being unloaded on one side of the bridge, and then loaded back on the other.

As a result of our meeting, two areas of discussion seem to stand out. One major issue is, "Where would the funding of the replacement and repair of these out-dated bridges come from?" Very few local governments would be capable of independently funding such a project. Often in situations such as this, federal matching funds are made available. However, we are faced this year with the delay in receiving those funds due to the failure of Congress to pass the Federal Highway Reauthorization Bill. That is making some progress now, and we will learn later in the session if the President is going to veto that bill, or if it will actually pass.

A second issue, which was actually more of a conclusion of the Subcommittee, was that state and local officials must work together to solve this problem. As a result, we are planning a follow-up meeting on April 7 at 10:00 am in Room 104 of the Capitol Annex. The purpose of this meeting will be to bring together Transportation Department officials, County Judge/Executives, and Transportation Center representatives so that we may better understand what their role will be in solving the problem. Today we hope to have some insight into how another state solved the problem. We can only gain by their information.